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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 003770

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: INDIAN ENVOY TO REVIVE IRAQ ASSISTANCE OFFER

REF: NEW DELHI 3402

Classified By: Charge Robert O. Blake, Jr., for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[11.](#) (C) On the eve of his May 22-25 mission to Baghdad, GOI mid-east envoy Chimaya Gharekhan told the Charge that "India needs to be move involved in Iraq" for its own interests, and indicated that he would convey to the Iraqi government "an open-ended commitment" to provide whatever assistance authorities in Baghdad would find most useful. The Charge welcomed the GOI's public offer to help with the process of constitution drafting, but encouraged Gharekhan also to think of other areas where India could be helpful, such as police and security force training that would capitalize on New Delhi's counter-insurgency experience. The Indian envoy replied that "we can do that kind of thing, but the Iraqis must show an interest." Echoing what we heard earlier from the Foreign Ministry (reftel) Gharekhan indicated that the GOI was prepared to move quickly on assistance, but would want to focus on programs that can be offered in India, at least until the security situation stabilizes.

[12.](#) (C) Discussing the broader issue of Indian involvement in Iraq, the Charge urged the lifting of the current GOI travel ban, noting that this denies economic opportunities to Indian workers and hobbles India's involvement there. Gharekhan reported that New Delhi would name a Baghdad ambassador "soon," flagged Indian interest in reviving contacts with the Iraqi oil ministry (including on exploration and training) and indicated that he would encourage the Iraqi Prime Minister to send a senior delegation to New Delhi that could energize bilateral relations.

[13.](#) (C) Comment: After months of ambivalence in the Indian approach to Iraq policy (fueled mainly by complicated coalition politics here in Delhi) the GOI is using the swearing in of the al-Jaffari government as an opportunity to demonstrate support for the Iraqi people and to begin reviving what was once India's most important Gulf relationship. Beyond the political risks of his mission, Gharekhan and his MEA Adviser, Joint Secretary Sanjay Singh, were clearly anxious about the security climate in Iraq, and may approach Embassy Baghdad for advice. In addition, the Department may wish to consider how we can capitalize on the GOI's newly enunciated "open-ended commitment" with a view to finding the best fit between Iraqi needs and Indian capacities. End Comment.

[14.](#) (U) Minimize considered.
BLAKE